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USDA AND MILITARY COOPERATE TO STOP FOREIGN INVADERS





Every military ship from overseas is boarded by an agricultural inspector. Here, he examines one of the food-storage facilities.

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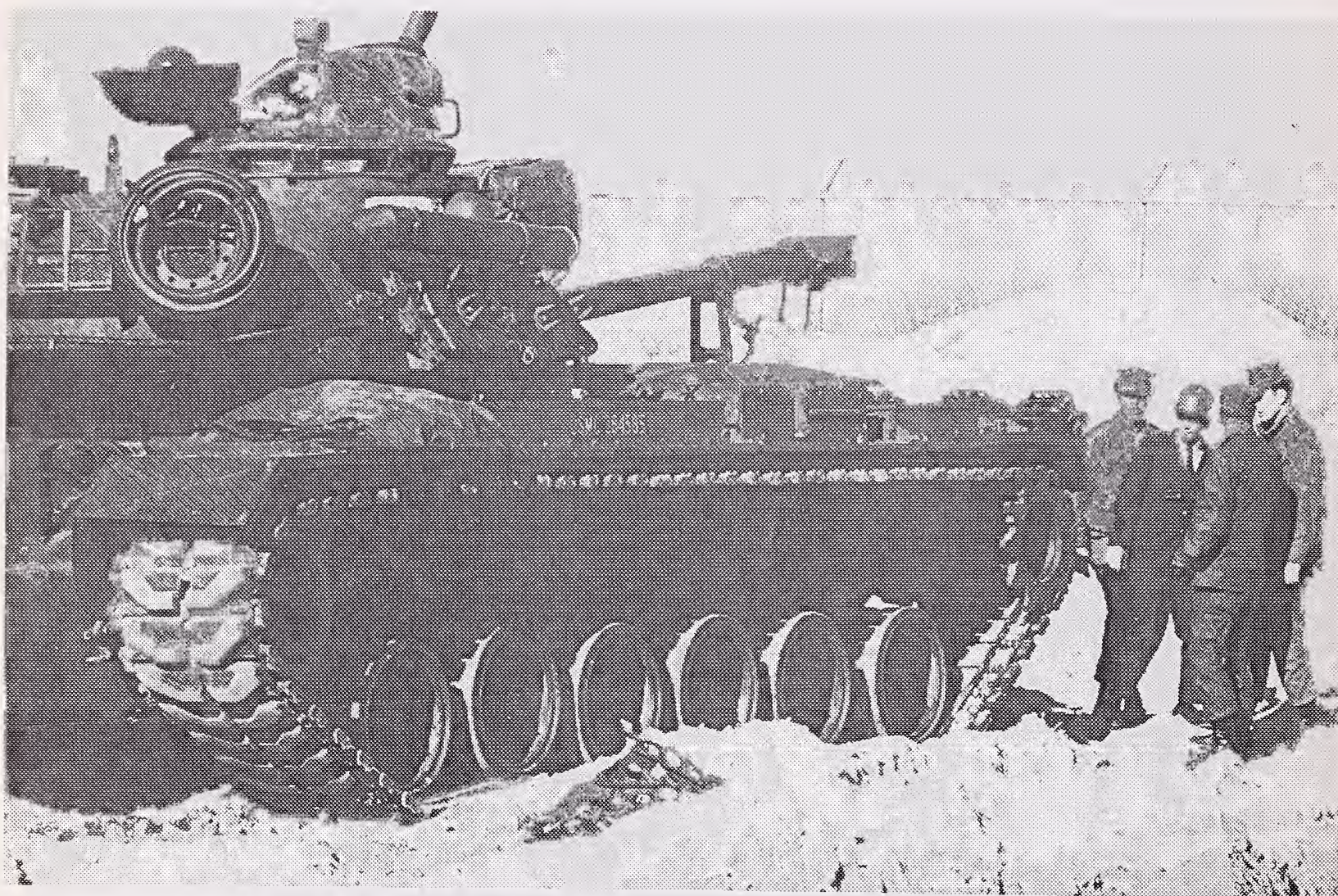
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USDA and the military cooperate daily to stop foreign "invaders" at our borders. If allowed to enter and become established in this country, plant and animal pests and diseases would cause millions of dollars damage to U.S. crops, lawns and gardens, forests, and livestock.

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A recent military flight to McChord Air Force Base, Wash., carried over 100 happy servicemen returning to the United States from bases in the Far East. Unknown to the pilot and crew, it also carried an invading "enemy" force—144 live insects that were discovered and destroyed by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) quarantine inspectors immediately after the plane landed.

The return of U.S. troops and military equipment and household goods from overseas presents unlimited opportunities for the "enemy"—foreign plant and animal pests—to invade this country. To prevent such pest invasions, USDA—in cooperation with U.S. Customs and the Department of Defense—carefully inspects all military aircraft, ships, cargo, and personal baggage returning from abroad.



Soil clinging to military equipment is a common hiding place for agricultural pests. For example, USDA inspectors, clearing a unit returning from maneuvers in Greece, discovered plant-eating white snails hitch-hiking on 75 vehicles. According to the troops, the snails were so plentiful in some areas of Greece that they resembled snow!

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The annual list of intercepted foreign pests includes some of the world's most destructive plant and animal insects and diseases. Many such pests are not present in this country and have no natural enemies here to act as a check on their population and destructive feeding.

One frequently intercepted pest, the Mediterranean fruit fly, has successfully invaded this country four times. Each outbreak was eradicated, at a total cost of over 20 million dollars. But, if it had been allowed to remain in this country, the damage to the citrus industry in Florida alone would have been an estimated 20 million dollars annually!

Agricultural quarantine inspection takes place at military installations throughout the continental U.S. on a regular or on-call basis. Ports of debarkation and international air terminals also have inspection facilities for incoming civilian cargoes as well. In addition, military flights from Puerto Rico and Hawaii are also preinspected and cleared in those areas before troops embark for the continental U.S. Preinspection is also done at certain locations in Southeast Asia, Okinawa, and Europe. Last year, inspection of military cargo alone ran to hundreds of thousands of tons.



Federal quarantines prohibit bringing into the U.S. items that could harbor destructive plant and animal pests. When illegal items are found by USDA inspectors, they are confiscated and destroyed. Such items include foreign meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, plant and animal products, and soil. Even the cotton or straw used in packing souvenirs may contain hitchhiking pests.

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Black light traps—designed to lure and trap night-flying insects—have been placed at all major military and civilian ports of entry. The traps function as an "early warning network," enabling USDA inspectors to determine when foreign pests sneak into the country, and to take control actions before the pests can establish colonies. 371X212-26

The movement of military cargo is a frequent source of transportation for insect pests. Checking cargo from Vietnam, at a military base in California, turned up hitchhiking beetles that could have endangered the huge rice-growing industry in that state.

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